

## CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method for providing a secure time reference, comprising the steps of:
  - 5 a) generating a clock signal at a source;
  - b) encrypting said clock signal;
  - c) transmitting said encrypted clock signal to a remote content playing apparatus;
  - 10 d) receiving said encrypted clock signal at said remote content playing apparatus;
  - e) decrypting said encrypted clock signal at said remote content playing apparatus; and,
  - f) altering the playability of content on said remote content playing apparatus by reference to said clock
  - 15 signal and a set of timing playback constraints specific to said content.
2. A method as described in Claim 1, wherein said clock signal comprises a date signal.
3. A method as described in Claim 1, wherein said clock signal
- 20 comprises a time-of-day signal.

4. A method as described in Claim 1, wherein said clock signal is encrypted by use of a process comprising a private key.

5. A method as described in Claim 1, further comprising the step of said remote content playing apparatus transmitting a query code

5 to said source and wherein said query code is encrypted by use of a process comprising a public key.

6. A method as described in Claim 1, wherein said step of transmitting said encrypted clock signal by said source is in response to a transmitted query.

10 7. A method as described in Claim 1, wherein said step of transmitting said encrypted clock signal is done by use of a process comprising use of the internet.

8. A method as described in Claim 1, wherein said step of transmitting said encrypted clock signal is done by use of a process  
15 comprising satellite technology.

9. A method as described in Claim 1, wherein said step of transmitting said encrypted clock signal is done by use of a process comprising use of a telephone system.

10. A method as described in Claim 1, wherein said step of receiving said encrypted clock signal at said remote content playing apparatus is done by use of a process comprising use of the internet.

11. A method as described in Claim 1, wherein said step of  
5 receiving said encrypted clock signal at said remote content playing apparatus is done by use of a process comprising use of satellite technology.

12. A method as described in Claim 1, wherein said step of receiving of said encrypted clock signal at said remote content  
10 playing apparatus is done by use of a process comprising use of a telephone system.

13. A method as described in Claim 1, wherein said clock signal is decrypted at said remote content playing apparatus by use of a process comprising use of a public key.

15 14. A method as described in Claim 1, wherein said content comprises intellectual property protected by copyright.

15. A source apparatus capable of transmitting a clock signal comprising:

c) a clock signal source device capable of generating said  
20 clock signal;

d) an encryption device, coupled with said source device, wherein said encryption device is capable of encrypting said clock signal; and,

e) a transmitting device, coupled with said source device and said encryption device, wherein said transmitting device is capable of transmitting said encrypted clock signal to a remote content playing apparatus in response to a time query therefrom.

16. A source apparatus as described in Claim 15, wherein said encryption device is capable of encrypting said clock signal by use of a process comprising a private key.

17. A source apparatus as described in Claim 15, wherein said source apparatus further comprises a query receiving device capable of receiving and decrypting said time query.

18. A source apparatus as described in Claim 15, wherein said transmitting device is capable of transmitting said encrypted clock signal by use of a process comprising use of the internet.

19. A source apparatus as described in Claim 15, wherein said transmitting device is capable of transmitting said encrypted clock signal by use of a process comprising use of satellite technology.

20. A source apparatus as described in Claim 15, wherein said transmitting device is capable of transmitting said encrypted clock signal by use of a process comprising use of a telephone system.

21. A receiving apparatus, comprising:

- 5       a) a receiving device capable of receiving a transmitted, encrypted, clock signal from an external source;
- b) a decryption device, coupled with said receiving device, wherein said decryption device is capable of decrypting said clock signal; and,
- 10       c) a content playing device capable of rendering digitized content;

wherein said content playing device is adapted to control the playback of said content by reference to said clock signal and to a set of time constraints pertinent to said content.

15 22. A receiving apparatus as described in Claim 21, wherein said content playing apparatus further comprises a query code source device capable of generating and transmitting a time query code.

23. A receiving apparatus as described in Claim 21, wherein said receiving device is capable of receiving said encrypted clock signal  
20 by use of a process comprising use of the internet.

24. A receiving apparatus as described in Claim 21, wherein said receiving device is capable of receiving said encrypted clock signal by use of a process comprising use of satellite technology.

25. A receiving apparatus as described in Claim 21, wherein said  
5 receiving device is capable of receiving said encrypted clock signal by use of a process comprising use of a telephone system.

26. A receiving apparatus as described in Claim 21, wherein said decryption device is capable of decrypting said clock signal by use of a process comprising a private key.

10 27. A receiving apparatus as described in Claim 21, wherein said content playing device is adapted to alter the playback of said content by reference to said clock signal and to said set of time constraints.

28. A system for controlling the playback of content by use of a  
15 time reference signal comprising:

a) a source apparatus capable of transmitting a clock signal, said source apparatus further comprising:

a1) a clock signal source device capable of generating said clock signal;

a2) an encryption device, coupled with said source device, wherein said encryption device is capable of encrypting said clock signal;

a3) a transmitting device, coupled with said source device and said encryption device, wherein said transmitting device is capable of transmitting said encrypted clock signal to a remote content playing apparatus; and,

a4) a query receiving device capable of receiving and decrypting a remote time query.

b) a receiving apparatus, communicatively coupled with said source apparatus, wherein said receiving apparatus is capable of receiving a clock signal, and wherein said receiving apparatus comprises:

b1) a receiving device;

b2) a decryption device, coupled with said receiving device; and,

b3) a content playing device, coupled with said receiving device and with said decryption device,

wherein said receiving apparatus is adapted to receive and decrypt a clock signal and wherein said content playing device

is adapted to control the playback of content by reference to said clock signal and to time constraints pertinent to said content.

29. A system as described in Claim 28, wherein said source

5 apparatus is adapted to encrypt said clock signal by use of a process comprising a private key technique.

30. A system as described in Claim 28, wherein said source

apparatus is adapted to decrypt said time query code by use of a process comprising a public key technique.

10 31. A system as described in Claim 28, wherein said source

apparatus is adapted to transmit said clock signal in response to said time query code.

32. A system as described in Claim 28, wherein said source

15 apparatus is adapted to transmit said encrypted clock signal by use of a process comprising use of the internet.

33. A system as described in Claim 28, wherein said source

apparatus is adapted to transmit said encrypted clock signal by use of a process comprising satellite technology.